



Lower Cowpasture Restoration and Management Project

George Washington and Jefferson National Forests

The Lower Cowpasture Restoration and Management Project is the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests' first-ever large landscape and integrated resource planning effort. The project plan describes restoration activities on 117,500 acres of public and private lands.

The Joint Chiefs' Proposal

This Project will build upon our history of collaboration and realize a truly all-lands approach to restoration by leveraging partnership resources and implementing cross-jurisdictional activities on the ground. Specifically, funding through the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership Program will be used to:

- Implement prescribed burns and fuel reduction treatments on national forest, state and private lands;
- Conduct oak woodland restoration, timber stand improvements, and targeted thinnings on national forest and private lands;
- Assist private landowners with developing and implementing forest management plans while focusing technical assistance on better management of habitats that benefit forest bats and early successional birds such as goldenwinged warbler, which is a NRCS Working Lands for Wildlife focal species and the subject of significant research by Virginia Bird Conservation Initiative partners within this landscape;
- Improve the function and connectivity of streams and protect water quality/quantity by replacing or removing impassible culverts on national forest lands and providing assistance with fish passage structures, fencing livestock out of waterways, stabilizing streambanks and planting riparian buffers to decrease water temperatures on adjacent private lands;
- Develop an American chestnut progeny site and plant seedlings on national forest lands, improve native pollinator habitat on national forest, state and private lands, and involve students, volunteers and partners in the collection of native grass and forb seeds and tree plantings; and
- Control non-native invasive species (NNIS) on priority national forest, state and private lands; while targeting public outreach on forest pests and pathogens through Don't Move Firewood and other initiatives.

Letter from District Ranger McNichols

Hello All:


Happy New Year!!! 2017 started off with the very good news that the LCRMP was awarded a Joint Chiefs' Partnership Grant of \$523,984. Thank you to Marek Smith whom was instrumental in pulling all the information together for this proposal!

The USFS portion is \$373,984 which includes \$142,800 for prescribe burning; \$54,192 for hardwood thinning, timber stand improvement, non-native invasive treatment and American chestnut restoration; \$15,348 for pollinator habitat establishment; and \$161,644 for aquatic organism passage and watershed improvement. State funding will be announced later in the year.

We are looking forward to our spring field trip to see the good work accomplished on the ground.

Elizabeth McNichols
District Ranger

Implementation Current Events

<p>Walton Tract Fish and Wildlife Habitat</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fish and Wildlife Habitat: Native Grass-Forb conversion at Walton Tract fields continues, with 15 acres slated to be converted from cool season grasses to native wildflower-grass mix. Areas directly along the banks of the Cowpasture will be buffered and planted in native tree species, other wildlife cover and food sources will be planted including shrub species.
<p>Aquatic, Riparian and Watershed Resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aquatic Passage/Watershed Restoration: Two large stream systems, Porters Mill and Piney Mountain Branch, will be the first to receive bottomless culverts to remove existing aquatic barriers posed by old or outdated culvert crossings. Roanoke engineering staff are currently working on contract packages and cost estimates for these crossings to connect the most upstream aquatic habitat and the highest quality habitat identified through the NEPA analysis and field surveys. Other culverts are identified on Limekiln Road and Pads Creek Road for future improvements when funding becomes available.
<p>Ecosystem Restoration – Vegetation Management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 timber sales were sold in Fiscal Year 2016. The first sale out the gate was the Porters Mill timber sale consisting of 10 harvest unit totaling 267 acres and 6503 hundred cubic feet of volume. The Beards Mountain timber sale was recently sold and consists of 10 harvest units totaling 237 acres and 4242 hundred cubic feet of volume. Timber sale offerings in 2017 include Lime Kiln and Cliftondale. Lime Kiln is planned to be sold in March with a volume of 5388 hundred cubic feet. Cliftondale is planned to be prepped this spring and to be sold in June.
<p>Ecosystem Restoration – Silviculture</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 13 timber stand improvement units are planned to be awarded under contract. This work involves releasing desirable crop trees in young stands. Crop trees to be release are primarily oak species. Herbicide spraying in areas of known non-native and invasive plants is set to occur this spring. This work involves basal application of tricloyr on larger tree-of-heaven and pawlonia. Other non-native work includes road-side spraying along Lime Kiln and Beards Mountain roads.
<p>Ecosystem Restoration - Wildlife Habitat, Forest Health and Silviculture</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The American Chestnut progeny planting in cooperation with the American Chestnut Foundation occurred in December 2016. This work involved planting hybrid chestnut seedlings in order to establish a blight resistant chestnut. Six hundred seedlings were planted. <div data-bbox="907 1409 1414 1881">  </div> <p>Site preparation completed for the American Chestnut Progeny Site. Credit– Jenny Henning, USFS</p>

Ecosystem Restoration -
Research

- Biomass removal is set to go along with the forthcoming Lime Kiln timber sale. This research will allow for a better understanding of the effects of small-diameter woody material removal on site productivity.

Ecosystem Restoration -
Fire

- With favorable weather conditions, our plan is to implement North Short Mtn. and Walton Tract scheduled prescribe burns in 2017. WRI is back with us assisting with prep and implementation. In addition we are working to have Mares Run and Middle Mtn. burn units ready for implementation in 2017.

Ecosystem Restoration -
Fire

- On February 21st, 50 acres of the Walton tract were successfully Prescribe burned. Units 1 and 3 were completed. We are looking for more opportunities this spring to burn the remaining units.
- Upcoming potential burns: Walton Tract: Spring 2017, 30-40 additional acres; North Short Mt: Spring 2017, 2258 acres.



*Photo of the Walton Tract Prescribe Burns
Credit – Nikole Simmons*

What's Happening?

On December 19 and 20 2016, Forest Service employees, and volunteers planted trees on a one acre progeny site. The district has been coordinating with The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF) to plant out at Bluegrass Hollow (also known as Mares Run unit 2). A little background on this project: These chestnut seedlings are hybridized, 1/16 Chinese and 15/16 American. The seedlings are supposed to have the blight resistance of Chinese chestnut but all the characteristics of the American. This progeny site will test the resistance of different hybridized families to the chestnut blight. It's important research (and pretty exciting) if you're a fan of the American Chestnut.



Volunteers, researchers and FS employees planting American Chestnut seedlings. Credit – Steve Tanguay, USFS

Lower Cowpasture Implementation Field Trip in March 2017!!!

Our field trip is scheduled for March 30, 2017 from 9:30 to 12:00. We will meet at the intersection of 629 and 683 (Bluegrass Hollow). This is about a mile south on 629 from Hwy 39. We'll plan to first go to the chestnut site where people can stage vehicles at the trailhead and carpool for the remainder of the field trip to look at Porter's Mill timber sale harvested units.

Please refer to the LCRMP project website for maps and updates:

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/gwj/home/?cid=STELPRDB5420614>